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AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY RABAT NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY NAGARA NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SOHA NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY AMMAN NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY HOUSATON NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SOJANBA NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY CAR ES SALAH NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK NIACI IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BERLIN IMMEDIATE
COMMISSION USAM NEW YORK IMMEDIATE
WHITE HOUSE IMMEDIATE BOSS
EINCPAC HONOLULU HI IMMEDIATE
EINCPAC VAININGEN GE IMMEDIATE

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MILITARY ADDRESSEES TREAT AS SPECIAL EXCLUSIVE

R.O. 12005; 608 12/28/85 (MURNBLON, MICHAEL)
TAGSI PEPK, AF, UN, US

SUBJECT: OUR ASSESSMENT OF RECENT EVENTS IN AFGHANISTAN

1. (C) ENTIRE TEXT.

2. ADDRESSEE POSTS MAY DRAW ON THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION
IN BRIEFING HOST GOVERNMENTS. ADDITIONAL TALKING POINTS
HAVE BEEN PROVIDED IN SEPTEL.

3. ON DECEMBER 27, AFGHAN PRESIDENT HAFIZULLAH AMIN WAS
DEPOSED AND EXECUTED IN A COUP D'ETAT CLEARLY PLANNED AND
EXECUTED BY THE SOVIET UNION. DURING THE TWO DAYS PRIOR
TO THE COUP A MASSIVE SOVIET AIRLIFT COMPRISING OVER 800
FLIGHTS BROUGHT MEN AND MATERIEL INTO KABUL. ALTHOUGH
THE PRECISE REASON FOR THE INTRODUCTION OF THESE NEW
FORCES WAS NOT CLEAR AT THE TIME, IT IS NOW APPARENT THAT
THE FIRST TASK WAS TO EFFECT A COUP AGAINST AMIN'S GOVERN-
MENT WHICH HAD PROVED INEFFECTIVE AND PERHAPS EMBARRASSING
TO THE SOVIETS.

4. RELIABLE EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS FROM KABUL INDICATE THAT
SOVIET TROOPS WERE ENGAGED IN FIGHTING AFGHAN TROOPS AND
OTHERS FOR CONTROL OF RADIO AFGHANISTAN. THE SOVIETS
WERE SEEN TO BE TAKING AFGHAN PRISONERS AND AT LEAST THREE

AFGHAN TANKS STATIONED NEAR THE RADIO BUILDING WERE DES-
TROYED. SOVIET CONVOYS WERE SEEN MOVING TOWARD THE CITY
AND THERE WAS FIGHTING OVER A PERIOD OF HOURS IN THE
VICINITY OF DURULAHAN PALACE, THE RESIDENCE OF AMIN.

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SOVIET TROOPS ARE NOW STATIONED IN KEY INTERSECTIONS AT KABUL AND IN FRONT OF MANY GOVERNMENT BUILDINGS.

5. OUR INITIAL FINDINGS INDICATE THAT THE FIRST ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE COUP APPEAR TO HAVE COME FROM TRANSMITTERS IN THE SOVIET UNION ITSELF, AND NOT FROM RADIO AFGHANISTAN IN KABUL. THESE ANNOUNCEMENTS WERE CLEARLY PRE-RECORDED AND WERE REPEATED CONTINUOUSLY ON SEVERAL FREQUENCIES PURPORTING TO BE RADIO AFGHANISTAN. ACCORDING TO THESE ANNOUNCEMENTS, BABRAK KARDEL HAD SUCCEEDED AMIN AND WAS NAMED PRESIDENT OF THE REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL. BABRAK (WHICH HE IS USUALLY CALLED) WAS FOR MANY YEARS A RIVAL OF FORMER PRESIDENT TAHARI FOR LEADERSHIP OF AFGHANISTAN'S MARXIST MOVEMENT. AFTER THE APRIL 1978 COUP BABRAK WAS NAMED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER BUT WITHIN A FEW MONTHS HE WAS "EXILED" AS AMBASSADOR TO PRAGUE, A POST HE HELD FOR ONLY SIX WEEKS BEFORE BEING ORDERED BACK TO KABUL. BABRAK DID NOT RETURN TO KABUL, BUT WE BELIEVE HE REMAINED IN EASTERN EUROPE UNTIL HIS INSTALLATION BY THE SOVIETS AS THE NEW AFGHAN PRESIDENT. HE IS KNOWN TO BE A DEDICATED MARXIST WHO HAS BEEN CLOSE TO THE SOVIETS FOR YEARS, AND HE WILL PROBABLY BE THOROUGHLY AMENABLE TO SOVIET DIRECTION. GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS INSTALLATION, BABRAK WILL CLEARLY BE DEPENDENT ON MOSCOW FOR HIS SURVIVAL.

6. WE HAVE REPORTS FROM KABUL THAT THE SOVIET AIRLIFT IS CONTINUING. EARLIER IN DECEMBER, AT LEAST THE EQUIVALENT OF A COMBAT REGIMENT ARRIVED AT BAGRAM AIR FORCE BASE SOME 40 MILES NORTH OF THE CAPITAL. A VERY SUBSTANTIAL BUILDUP OF SOVIET FORCES IMMEDIATELY NORTH OF THE AFGHAN BORDER INVOLVING THE ELEMENTS OF AT LEAST FIVE DIVISIONS, SUGGESTS THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE ADDITIONAL MILITARY OBJECTIVES BEYOND THE CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT IN KABUL. THIS BUILDUP

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INCLUDES LARGE NUMBERS OF COMBAT AIRCRAFT AND HELICOPTERS.

7. THE NEW REGIME HAS ALREADY MADE SOME CONCILIATORY PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS IN AN EFFORT TO MAKE IT MORE PALATABLE TO THE AFGHAN PUBLIC AND HAS OFFERED TO NEGOTIATE

WITH VARIOUS INSURGENT GROUPS. HOWEVER, WE EXPECT THAT MOST OF THE INSURGENTS WILL PROBABLY SPURN THESE APPROACHES SINCE THEY ARE LIKELY TO REGARD BADRAI AS EVEN MORE A CREATURE OF THE SOVIET UNION THAN HIS PREDECESSOR. BADRAI WILL DOUBTLESS GIVE LIP SERVICE TO NON-ALIGNMENT BUT WILL IN FACT BE PURSUING APRO-SOVIET POLICY AND BE SUBSERVIENT TO THE SOVIETS IN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.

8. THE NEW REGIME MAY HAVE A DIFFICULT TIME CO-OPTING ELEMENTS OF THE FORMER GOVERNMENT. THE AFGHAN ARMY WHICH WAS ALREADY BADLY DEMORALIZED WILL BE FURTHER SHAKEN BY THIS MOST RECENT COUP AND THERE MAY WELL BE MORE DESERTIONS. THE AFGHAN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM WAS ALREADY IN SHAMBLES DUE TO THE WIDESPREAD, POPULAR INSURGENCY THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRYSIDE. THE SOVIETS WILL FACE A DIFFICULT TASK IN REBUILDING THE AFGHAN ARMY AND RECONSTRUCTING THE ECONOMY.

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